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ABSTRACT

The Department of Education's (ED) rural education/rural family education policy for the 80's includes strengthened efforts to insure that rural education shall receive an equitable share of information, services, assistance, and funds available through ED and its programs. The Department will assist educators in developing outreach and volunteer programs with the active support and interaction of parents, teachers, civic groups, and businesses, in an effort to improve delivery of educational services to rural communities. The database on education in rural areas will be expanded, and information disseminated through existing organizations/agencies and new technologies. Department program regulations will be monitored to insure equity for all districts, regardless of size/location. The Department will help identify and develop special programs for rural handicapped individuals. Department personnel will coordinate available research on shortages and needs, effective practices, and programs, for the Education Secretary's Rural Education Committee. Rural institutions will be included by the Department in demonstration programs and rural communities will be involved in educational technology planning. Consultants and technical assistance will be provided to improve the quality of rural education. Local/regional/state/federal networks will be coordinated to improve public sector/private sector collaboration. The Department will help rural education improve achievement of Blacks, American Indians, migrants, and other minority students. Family education programs/services will be provided through vocational home economics education. (MH)

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RURAL EDUCATION AND RURAL FAMILY EDUCATION POLICY FOR THE 80's

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

THE SECRETARY

Rural Education and Rural Family Education Policy for the 80's

The Department of Education recognizes the unique and valuable contributions rural America has made to both the social and economic development of our country. In recent decades, however, the changing dynamics of our urban centers have forced public policy decisions which tend to emphasize solutions to urban concerns rather than rural concerns; this despite the fact that over one-fourth of all Americans still live -- and are educated -- in areas described as "rural."* While the Department of Education remains committed to programs that help urban youth and adults, it is appropriate that we strengthen our efforts to provide programs that address the educational needs of rural and small town youth and adults. Those educated in rural areas must be provided with the basic educational tools necessary to enter an increasingly complex workforce. Rural educators ask no more than "equity" in their attempts to work within the Federal and State education structures to assure rural and small town youth and adults equal educational opportunities. To meet this goal, the Department of Education adopts the following policy:

RURAL EDUCATION SHALL RECEIVE AN EQUITABLE SHARE OF THE INFORMATION, SERVICES, ASSISTANCE AND FUNDS AVAILABLE FROM AND THROUGH THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND ITS PROGRAMS.

* As defined in the 1980 census, the rural population comprises all persons living outside urbanized areas in the open country or in communities with less than 2500 inhabitants. It also includes those living in areas of extended cities with a population density of less than 1000 inhabitants per square mile.

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To the extent that resources are available, the Department of Education is prepared to take the following initiatives in this regard:

- The Department will assist educators and administrators on all levels interested in developing outreach and volunteer programs with the active support and interaction of parents, teachers, civic groups and the business community to improve the delivery of educational services to rural communities.

- The Department will work to expand the data base on the condition of education in rural areas, and will provide the necessary technologies to disseminate information relevant to curriculum, organization, personnel and support services needed for educational institutions serving rural communities. Data collection will focus on information relating to regional designations; goals of rural education and rural family education; surveys of rural curricula; test score comparisons; tax base/student ratios; characteristics of effective rural programs and institutions; and descriptions of intermediate service agency delivery systems. To disseminate information to educational institutions and programs serving rural communities, including rural school districts, the Department will utilize State Departments of Education; ERIC/CRESS; the Rural Education Association; other professional and service organizations; national advisory councils; youth organizations; intermediate units; American Education Magazine; and, county and local agencies.

- The Department, with appropriate control staff, will closely monitor Education program regulations, eligibility and evaluation criteria, subregulatory directives and administrative policies to insure equity for all LEAs regardless of size, location or condition. Monitoring will focus on reducing complexity of criteria for funding; reducing complexity of application and reporting procedures and forms; and reducing unrealistic requirements in general while insuring competent and enlightened staff monitoring.

- The Department will assist in identifying and developing special programs available for handicapped individuals located in rural areas.

- The Department will provide personnel to coordinate the consolidation of available research on shortages and additional needs for analysis by the Secretary's Rural Education Committee. Research will focus on effective practices and characteristics of effective rural programs and projects.

- The Department will include rural institutions in demonstration and pilot projects, and will involve cross sections of rural communities in educational technology planning.

- The Department will provide consultative and technical assistance to rural educational entities as a means to improve the quality of education in rural areas. To facilitate

communications, the Department will support initiatives such as an annual national forum; a monthly newsletter; and utilization of extension services and existing organizations for dissemination of information.

- The Department will assist in improving public sector/private sector collaboration by coordinating networks at local, regional, State and Federal levels.

- The Department will assist rural education in improving the achievement of black students, American Indian students, children of migrant workers and other minorities. To this end, the Department will focus on data concerning rates of graduation from high school and college, including secondary and postsecondary vocational institutions and programs; gains in functional literacy, changes in college enrollment and achievements in adult education.

- The Department will assist individuals and families living in rural areas with family education programs and services through vocational home economics education, an established delivery system, as a means of improving quality of rural family education.

T. H. Bell
Secretary of Education

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